

1. A method comprising:

receiving computer data from a first computer for  
transmission to a second computer via a network; and  
screening the computer data for at least one virus  
before communicating the computer data to the second  
computer.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein the network comprises  
an IP network.

3. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

if the at least one virus is detected, performing at  
least one of the following:

(i) inhibiting communication of at least a  
portion of the computer data to the second computer;

(ii) removing the at least one virus from the  
computer data prior to transferring the computer  
data to the second computer;

(iii) communicating a message indicating that  
the at least one virus was detected to the second  
computer;

(iv) communicating a message indicating that  
the at least one virus was detected to the first  
computer; and

(v) writing data to a database indicating that  
the at least one virus was detected.

4. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

receiving computer data from the second computer for transmission to the first computer; and

5 screening the computer data received from the second computer for at least one virus before communicating the computer data received from the second computer to the first computer.

5. A system comprising:

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a network;

a first computer;

a second computer in communication with the first computer via the network; and

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a virus screening device connected to the network operative to screen computer data received from the first computer for at least one virus before communicating the computer data to the second computer.

6. The system of Claim 5, wherein the network comprises  
20 an IP network.

7. The system of Claim 5, wherein a configuration associated with the second computer routes communicated data to the virus screening device.

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8. The system of Claim 5, further comprising:

a third computer communicatively linked to the second computer via a local area network, wherein the virus screening device resides outside the local area network.

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9. The system of Claim 5, wherein the computer data comprises an electronic mail message.

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10. The system of Claim 5, wherein the computer data comprises data requested by the second computer from the first computer.

11. A method comprising:

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receiving screened data from a network-based virus screening device configured to screen data for at least one virus before communicating the data to a first computer; and

forwarding the screened data to the first computer.

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12. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

receiving a request for requested data from the first computer;

sending the request across a network to a second computer; and

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requesting that the requested data be returned via the network-based virus screening device.

13. The method of Claim 11, wherein the network comprises an IP network.

14. The method of Claim 11, wherein the network-based virus screening device resides within a wide area network, and wherein the method further comprises:

receiving across a local area network a request for requested data from the first computer;

sending the request across the wide area network to a second computer; and

requesting that the requested data be returned via the network-based virus screening device.

15. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

receiving a request for requested data from the first computer at a modem external to the first computer; and

initiating communication of the request from the modem across an IP network to a second computer.

16. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

forwarding a request to terminate a virus screening function of the network-based virus screening device.

17. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

configuring the network-based virus screening device to inhibit communication of at least a portion of the requested data.

5        18. The method of Claim 11, further comprising:

         configuring the network-based virus screening device to inhibit communication of executables to the first computer.

10       19. The method of Claim 11, wherein the network-based virus screening device resides within a wide area network, and wherein the method further comprises:

         configuring the network-based virus screening device to inhibit communication of executables to the first  
15       computer; and

         configuring an electronic mail system associated with the first computer to route messages addressed to the first computer through the network-based virus screening device.

20       20. The method of Claim 11, wherein the first computer is communicatively coupled to a local area network and the network-based virus screening device resides outside a firewall associated with the local area network, and  
25       wherein the method further comprises:

configuring the network-based virus screening device to inhibit communication of executables to the first computer; and

5        configuring an electronic mail system associated with the first computer to route messages addressed to the first computer through the network-based virus screening device.